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FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF GERMANY

THE CHANCELLOR

Bonn, August 29, 1961

Personal and confidential

My dear Mr. President:

I am availing myself of the opportunity offered by the return to Washington of our Ambassador to transmit these lines to you. They spring from my conviction that it is of the utmost importance in the present situation that we should constantly and as intensively as possible exchange ideas and reflections and harmonize our policies and attitudes.

The events of recent weeks have put us all to a severe test. We are in the midst of a crisis which in all probability will rapidly be aggravated and become more acute.

In this situation I have understood your desire to negotiate with the Soviet Union and have supported it in the quadripartite discussions of recent weeks.

His Excellency

John F. Kennedy,

President of the United States

At the same time I also understand General de Gaulle's concern that any initiative to bring about negotiations might be misinterpreted as a sign of Western weakness. I am confident that the Allied Governments will in the next few weeks preclude any such misunderstanding. I am therefore very glad that the Foreign Ministers will meet on September 14. I think it necessary to start the discussion of the objectives and strategy of the negotiations even earlier, so that it may be concluded at that meeting.

Apart from the possibility that the Soviets might misinterpret the West's willingness to negotiate, I am above all concerned about the danger of further unilateral actions before or during the envisaged negotiations and during the period in which the build-up of a Western position of military strength will not yet be far enough advanced.

I am of the opinion that acquiescence in any further acts of force such as occurred in Berlin on August 13 and thereafter is utterly out of the question. It therefore appears to me to be imperative that we have a fresh study made of nonmilitary countermeasures that might be taken when there is any threat, not as yet to access to Berlin or to the integrity of West Berlin territory, but to other important rights and interests of citizens of West Berlin. When Secretary Rusk visited me in Cadenabbia, I drew his attention to the necessity of discussing a system of economic measures against the Eastern bloc, so that economic sanctions can be applied to an ever-increasing degree. The more intensively I study economic conditions in the Eastern bloc, the more I am convinced that we can give the Eastern bloc trouble in the economic field.

I have asked Ambassador Grewe to present my ideas to you orally. Ambassador Grewe knows my thoughts on the subject and has my full confidence. I should be most grateful if you would hold such a conversation with him;

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it could probably bring out my thoughts more clearly than a long letter.

Sincerely yours,

[s] Adenauer